

PORTRAIT OF PRACTICES IN SUPPORT OF FIRST PEOPLES STUDENT SUCCESS IN CEGEP AND UNIVERSITY: MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER



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In response to the calls for action formulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), an increasing number of initiatives are being implemented in institutions of higher education to support First Peoples student success and facilitate their access to education. This requires forums for the stakeholders involved in the indigenization process to nurture dialogue and ensure consistency. With this in mind, the Consortium d'animation sur la persévérance et la réussite en enseignement supérieur (CAPRES) joined forces with the Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite, the Fédération des cégeps and Dawson College to organize an activity addressing these issues in order to develop the Portrait des pratiques, a portrait of practices in support of First Peoples student success in CEGEP and university.¹

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

On October 17, 2019, the round-table discussion held as part of the fourth edition of the Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples provided an opportunity for numerous stakeholders to meet with a view to developing a portrait of practices in support of First Peoples student success and identifying ways for CEGEPs and universities to work together. Then, the round table organizers consulted the audience in an effort to garner opinions on priorities for the future. Panellists Lucie Charbonneau (Coordinator, CAPRES), Hélène Jean-Venturoli (Coordinator, Commission of Academic Deans of Colleges, Fédération des cégeps), Wolfgang Krotter (Assistant Dean, Creative and Applied Arts, Dawson College), Michelle Smith (Journeys Coordinator, Dawson College) and Johanne Jean (Chair, Réseau de l'Université du Québec) addressed the question of how we can move forward together. The round table was hosted by Marco Bacon, Director of the Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite at UQAC.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT CAPRES

Created in 2002, CAPRES is committed to developing a culture of access to higher education in Quebec. In an inter-level perspective, and through joint reflection on the implementation of policies, programs and measures to support students, CAPRES "offers practitioners a place to come together and to work together on research and practice" (Lucie Charbonneau, free translation). On the topic of the indigenization of higher education, CAPRES published *Accessibilité des Premiers Peuples au cégep et à l'université* in 2018. Nineteen practitioners from different schools collaborated on the project. To open the round-table discussion, Lucie Charbonneau shared four strategies implemented by CAPRES to support the indigenization of higher education: 1) a review of the knowledge gleaned from research, practice and public policy; 2) the development of dossiers on topics and issues as they relate to needs targeted in schools; 3) the sharing of knowledge using a variety of means of communication; and 4) the

facilitation of meetings and the mobilization of stakeholders affected by the issues in question.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE FÉDÉRATION DES CÉGÉPS TO THE INDIGENIZATION PROCESS

The Fédération des cégeps is a voluntary association of the 48 CEGEPs in Quebec, 5 of which are English-language colleges. With a view to networking around activities to raise awareness of Indigenous realities that were taking place independently in the schools, the Fédération created the Committee on Indigenous Student Success in College (CRÉAC) in 2016. Bringing together experts from different CEGEPs, it is made up of representatives from the educational affairs, student affairs and continuing education departments at various colleges and relies on the expertise of Indigenous partners. CRÉAC actively helps support Indigenous students, and organized two study days² in collaboration with CAPRES, at which they compiled a variety of points of view in order to gain a better understanding of the obstacles encountered by First Peoples students during their time at college.

Another initiative involves the study conducted by CRÉAC throughout the college network, which gave a clear picture of the types of support offered to Indigenous students. Of the 34 colleges surveyed, 19 responded, making it possible to collect information from 974 Indigenous students (40% in continuing education and 60% in general education) and to develop a realistic portrait of practices. In order to ensure a broad scope, CRÉAC presents its work before commissions put together by the Fédération des cégeps, which are made up of college administrators. During the round-table discussion, Hélène Jean-Venturoli, coordinator of the Fédération des cégeps, presented the mapping of practices aimed at improving First Peoples' access to colleges in Quebec. A summary of the mapping results is presented in Table 1.

DAWSON COLLEGE: MOBILIZATION OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY AROUND INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Founded in 1968 and located in downtown Montreal, Dawson College is the largest English-language CEGEP in Quebec, welcoming more than 8,000 students annually, 2,000 of them in continuing education. Wolfgang Krotter points out the proximity of the Kahnawà:ke Community College and Kanehsatà:ke,

as well as various urban Indigenous organizations (Nunavik Sivanutsivut, Avatak, Native Montreal, Cree School Board, etc.). First implemented in 2014, Dawson College's indigenization process is based on four strategic steps.

Brainstorming sessions revealed a lack of knowledge about Indigenous culture and customs and the issues Indigenous students currently face. The absence of academic and psychosocial support services for Indigenous students was also observed, as was the under-representation of Indigenous staff members and a lack of Indigenous content in programs.

The First Peoples' Initiative was created in 2015 as a result of these findings, and is still ongoing today. It led to the implementation of numerous indigenization measures thanks to the creation of the Indigenous Education Council, which brings together most of Montreal's stakeholders in Indigenous post-secondary education.³

In January 2019, Dawson College organized a round-table discussion on Indigenous education that led to the development of a three-year strategic plan (2019-2022). The plan is aimed at devising strategies to raise practitioners' awareness of Indigenous realities. The various initiatives associated with these strategic steps are presented in Table 1.

THE REGROUPEMENT DES UNIVERSITÉS DU QUÉBEC: MAPPING TEACHING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Johanne Jean presented the results of a mapping exercise, a portrait of teaching and research activities for, by and with Indigenous people in 19 Quebec universities. The methodological approach used for the study, which is still under way, follows a protocol described by Jean. Prior to the study, the parameters to be documented were submitted for approval to the Bureau de la Coopération Interuniversitaire (BCI) task force and an Indigenous oversight committee. One respondent per university was tasked with the transmission of information, which was compiled then submitted for approval to

the university's administration. The 19 universities participating in the study were also invited to share their initiatives and inspirational practices in the form of fact sheets. The data collected in September 2019 allowed Jean to present a detailed, although preliminary, report at the round-table discussion. The results are presented in Table 1.

A PORTRAIT IN FOUR DIMENSIONS

The panellists structured their presentation around four components providing access to various initiatives and practices in their universities: organization, academic affairs, student experience and partnerships. For the purposes of this article, and in an attempt to be as succinct as possible, the initiatives and practices associated with each component are presented in a cross-disciplinary table.

The table is followed by a description of the actions proposed by workshop participants. For the organizational component, panellists addressed issues related to governance, strategic planning and administrative structures, as well as the responses to the calls for action. The academic affairs component included approaches, programs, continuing education and teacher training relating to Indigenous realities.

The student experience component involved reception and support services, while the fourth component reviewed partnerships with the schools and organizations and inter-institutional initiatives. Table 1 gives a summary of the practices and initiatives shared by the panellists for each component.

**TABLE 1
Summary of initiatives presented
by the panellists for each component**

ORGANIZATION		
Fédération des cégeps	Dawson College	Réseau UQ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising in the college network • Promising actions (study days) • Concentration on student needs • Promotion of Indigenous cultures • Discussions on the concept of success • Adaptation of structures • Sensitivity to pace and realities • Deconstruction of bias • Realism and sustainability of CRÉAC's projects and initiatives • Awareness raising among 500 people over 3 years 	<p>2015 First Peoples' Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to funding/grants • Creation of the Centre for First People • Creation of the Indigenous Education Council <p>2019: Strategic plan (2019-2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation at every level of college administration • Indigenous visibility • Pressure on the government to reform funding policies • Awareness raising, information and innovation 	<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of directors • Indigenous advisory committee <p>Strategic planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan on Indigenous realities • Mention of Indigenous realities in future action plans • Indigenous representatives <p>Administrative structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of administrative positions and positions assigned to Indigenous issues • Team of indigenization experts

TABLE 1 (CONT.)
**Summary of initiatives presented
 by the panellists for each component**

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS		
Fédération des cégeps	Dawson College	Réseau UQ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff awareness • Adaptation of content and approaches • 30 First Nations- and Inuit-related ACSs • Indigenous liaison officers • Differentiated educational support • Support lexicon • Accommodation measures for tests, activities and the ministerial examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of specialized certificates • Teacher training • Inter-level transition measures 	<p>For the three levels of university programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized program offering (summer school, language retention, socioeconomic needs, Indigenous studies) • Incorporation of Indigenous content (systematic process or targeted initiatives) • Languages, places and methods of instruction • University education services • Adaptation of academic paths and administrative rules • Participation of Indigenous practitioners • Pooling of support expertise for student services • Master's and doctoral programs • Scholarships for Indigenous students • Consideration of Indigenous knowledge • Indigenous professional researchers • Research topics and professors • Dissemination of research results

STUDENT EXPERIENCE		
Fédération des cégeps	Dawson College	Réseau UQ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized follow-up • Workshops on student perseverance and success • Mutual help groups • TRC communities of practice • Cultural visits and internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of student spaces • Personalized support for students • Personal growth programs and visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception and integration • Cultural and social activities • Indigenous staff • Cultural competencies of staff • Indigenous enrollments • Dedicated infrastructures • Support for student success, psychosocial support, financial support, external services • Access to Elder support • Activities to celebrate successes

TABLE 1 (CONT.)
**Summary of initiatives presented
 by the panellists for each component**

PARTNERSHIPS		
Fédération des cégeps	Dawson College	Réseau UQ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministerial reflection (2017-2018) Cooperation (FNEC, CPNN, Kiuna) Indigenous partners and resources Inter-level transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration and coordination of efforts with colleges in Montreal Participation in the university community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research chairs and networks Infrastructures and associations Community services (participation in community development, continuing education and popular awareness)

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

In all, some 30 participants in six work teams participated in the workshop following the round-table discussion. During this time, the event coordinators and guest speakers visited the tables to spark discussion. The participants all recognized the merits of the indigenization of higher education. Several of them were from institutions where Indigenous students are enrolled: Commission scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay (CSRS), several CEGEPs (Jonquière, Alma, St-Félicien, Chicoutimi, Trois-Rivières and Ahuntsic) and several universities (UQAC, UQAT, UdeM, ULaval and McGill).

Representatives of organizations that provide services for Indigenous students also participated: LOJIQ, the Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite (CPNN) and the Centre du savoir sur mesure (CESAM). The one-hour workshop in the form of a round-table discussion included an ice breaker during which participants were asked to think about the following questions: What inspires you? What did you learn that surprised you? How might you become involved?

Then, the group was invited to select an action they all deemed important, define its general objective, determine what body should be in charge of the dossier, name other stakeholders who could become involved in the action, and develop a sequential action plan based on rallying points. The working documents containing the participants' proposals were posted on CAPRES's website in December 2019. Table 2 presents an overview of these proposals.

The workshop discussions were animated, and each team was able to target priority actions to support Indigenous student success in higher education. A number of participants mentioned the need to develop an accessible and effective

communication platform to allow all of the stakeholders involved in the indigenization process to share their initiatives. One of the partners, Guy Niquay, expressed it this way:

“Let’s share our knowledge. Let’s share our expertise. Let’s share our experience.”

Some participants mentioned that, in order to connect with the realities of Indigenous people, we need to respect “Indian time,” adopt an attitude of openness and “think outside the box.”

The need to start with students’ needs was also expressed several times during the workshop. The comments of one college student recounted by Hélène Jean-Venturoli emphasized the importance of sharing resources and efforts in order to support the shift toward greater consideration for the realities of Indigenous students in higher education:

“If you want to be proud of your identity, you need to know your history. It has to change, even for the non-Indigenous people who don’t know us.”

TABLE 2
**Actions proposed by participants
 in the *Further together* workshop**

	Individual actions	Objectives	Body responsible for the dossier and other stakeholders involved	Rallying points
Team 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous update of portrait of practices • Development of staff's cultural competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of inter-level advisory committees (students, vocational training, CEGEPs and universities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) 	
Team 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of Indigenous members in academic governance bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seats reserved in all organizations' decision-making bodies • Peer mentorship for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management of bodies • Teachers, professors, students, socioeconomic members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategic plan • Implement the plan • Report to the board of directors
Team 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarship ceremony • Celebration of successes • Indigenous week • Partners – Indigenous Elders • Indigenous studies incorporated into programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that students are at the heart of the process • Discussion on the issue of self-identification • Support for parents • Intergenerational bridges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-level committee dedicated to Indigenous students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult students directly about their needs, their challenges and their reality
Team 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of inclusive learning content and evaluation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official implementation of inclusive educational initiatives with respect to learning content and evaluation processes • Respect for and representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous realities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of studies (Jonquière, Alma, St-Félicien and Chicoutimi CEGEPs) • Academic council • Innu and Atikamekw representatives • MEES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish concerted strategic plans in line with the First Nations' education protocol
Team 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the basis for all decision-making processes: agree on the principle that all cultures are equal and on the need to respect their differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of joint institutional programs whose key objective is to use the needs identified by the Indigenous population as a starting point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENAP-UQAC-UQAT programs • Contact person at MEES to receive requests from the Indigenous communities (Loïc Di Marcantonio) • Indigenous organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more supportive of the Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire (BCI) • Reduce competition • Create spaces for collaboration • Create official positions dedicated to supporting Indigenous students (teachers, professors, reception staff and professionals)
Team 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification and revitalization of educational approaches • Differentiation of evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and openness to an adaptable process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEES • Representatives of each level of education • Educational institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give choices • Vary approaches • Increase the amount of funding per student

CONCLUSION

The two summary tables in this report give an overview of the initiatives already in place in the indigenization of higher education. This meeting between cultures proposed by CAPRES in collaboration with the Fédération des Cégeps, the BCI, Dawson College and the Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite fostered cooperation between strategic stakeholders and identified priority actions that will be closely monitored.

Participants were asked the question “How can we have a positive effect in the long term?” and discussions will surely continue at future activities organized by CAPRES and its collaborators.

Maintaining collaborative ties is crucial in supporting the implementation of the priority actions identified during the round-table discussion and in making sure that these actions have a tangible impact in educational institutions for those directly concerned: Indigenous students. In this respect, many believe that a discussion of the very concept of success needs to be had and documented. At the very least, a step forward was taken by all parties toward the recognition of the realities of Indigenous students in higher education, and a wide range of strategic stakeholders committed to this joint project expressed their desire to contribute to their success. ♦

Notes

¹ Organizing committee: Marco Bacon (Director, Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi), Lucie Charbonneau (Coordinator, CAPRES), Marie-José Fortin (Director, Office of the President, Université du Québec), Hélène Jean-Venturoli (Coordinator, Commission of Academic Deans of Colleges, Fédération des cégeps), Wolfgang Krotter (Assistant Dean, Creative and Applied Arts, Dawson College) and Eve-Lyne Rondeau (Professional, Université du Québec)

² Indigenous Student Success in College Day - June 2017, Wendake; Cultural Safety Day - May 2019, Collège Ahuntsic.

³ Kahnawà:ke Survival School, Cree School Board's Post-Secondary Student Services, Kativik School Board, First Nations Regional Adult Education Centre, McGill University's First Peoples House, Concordia's Aboriginal Student Resource Centre, Kahnawake Education Centre



Round-table panellists. From left to right: Marco Bacon, Wolfgang Krotter, Hélène Jean-Venturoli, Michelle Smith and Joanne Jean.